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## Devastation

# NJDOC Officers Aid Puerto Rico in Aftermath of Hurricanes

By Patrick Lombardi

The United States territory of Puerto Rico recently was ravaged by two separate hurricanes within one month.

In the beginning of September, Hurricane Irma, a Category 5 storm, barreled through the island, causing several casualties and approximately \$1 billion in damages. Before the month was through, another Category 5 storm, Hurricane Maria, destroyed the country's power grid and left millions without electricity. The storm took more than 30 lives and caused an additional \$90 billion in damages.

New Jersey was among the first states to deploy agencies to the island following the second storm. On September 29, Governor Chris Christie announced that he would send more than 1,000 emergency responders to the island to assist in recovery efforts. Among the first responders was the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC), which consisted of eight officers from Central Office headquarters (COHQ) and three Correctional Emergency



*Senior Correction Officer Cisco Hernandez of Garden State Youth Correctional Facility was one of 11 officers from the New Jersey Department of Corrections to aid Puerto Rico in its recovery relief efforts.*

Response Team (CERT) officers from separate facilities. The officers were deployed to San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital and largest city.

The 11 officers had little time to prepare for their trip abroad, and not even the extensive media coverage could prepare them for the devastation they would witness in Puerto Rico.

"When we got down there, everything was in disarray," said Sergeant Kevin McGowan of COHQ.

Senior Correction Officer Mario Smester of CERT at East Jersey State Prison spent much of his childhood in Puerto Rico, visiting his grandparents for several months every summer until he was 14. He was distraught to see the effects of the storms.

"I know the beauty that was there, and it wasn't there anymore," Smester described. "The mountains that were once green were brown; the vegetation was gone; areas were destroyed."

Buildings had collapsed; palm trees were bare and uprooted, and much of the island's infrastructure was either destroyed or severely damaged.

"It was heartbreaking to see the state of the island when we arrived," said SCO Steve Hernandez of COHQ, who had just visited Puerto Rico last April.

The NJDOC officers faced long days as they worked to keep the citizens of San Juan safe and at ease. The officers would awaken at approximately four o'clock every morning to be at their posts by 7 a.m., where they would remain on their feet for 12 hours in the heat, wearing 30 pounds of equipment. But the officers noted that they weren't the only ones who faced long hours every day, as those who lived on the island were largely without electrical power and many vital resources but still sought to provide for their families.

"You had people waiting in line for three hours for one bag of ice or for one case of water," McGowan said. "And at the end of the day, there may be people still waiting in line, and they may not have gotten their bag of ice or the case of water."

Due to the storms' catastrophic impact, the individuals representing the agencies that were deployed to the island were some of the only respected, authoritative figures working each day.

"Directly after the second storm, only about 30 percent of Puerto Rico's police force showed up to work," Lieutenant Clay McClain of COHQ explained. "So there was a lot of additional lawlessness that was transpiring down there."

Before first responders from the U.S. arrived on the island to provide security, the citizens of Puerto Rico were worried about waiting long hours in lines with large amounts of cash in order to purchase necessities.

"Even when we first got down there, the citizens were apprehensive about us being there," said SCO Mark Wilson of COHQ. "We were down there for force protection and security, but we had to make those people who lived there comfortable, too."

The officers remained friendly and social with the San Juan residents, which allowed them to feel comfortable and more upbeat.

"By the third or fourth day, the residents were actually looking for us to talk to us," said McClain, adding that the residents also were happy to share their stories, even under the circumstances. "One family had 21 family members living with them, because the other houses they lived in were destroyed."



*Hurricane Maria caused \$90 billion in damages to the island in the early fall.*

The people were thankful that the NJDOC officers were present each day, and they shared their gratitude in a number of ways.

"You'd have people who looked like they had nothing walk up to you with water and say, 'Here, officers, please take this,'" said SCO Charles Burkhardt of COHQ. "A woman on the street was selling food,

and she gave some to Mark and the lieutenant, and she didn't want money. You'd have to throw it in her basket or else she wouldn't take it.

"Someone who probably lost a lot is giving you food and water," Burkhardt added. "That spoke volumes."

SCO Jaime Rivera of CERT at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women stated: "We are out there helping them, and all they want to do is help us for nothing in return. It was a very humbling experience."

Since the officers would see many of the same people every day, they explained that they began to form bonds with them, making it difficult for the officers to depart when the two weeks were finished.



*The officers from the department's Special Operations Group and Correctional Emergency Response team spent 14 days in San Juan following hurricanes Irma and Maria.*

"I wanted to stay longer," said SCO Cisco Hernandez of CERT at Garden State Youth Correctional Facility. "I missed my wife and my kids, but even with those long days with the sun beating down, I wouldn't have it any other way. They were the longest, hardest weeks of my life, but they were some of the best weeks of my life as well."

Likewise, the San Juan citizens, workers and local police officers were saddened to see the NJDOC personnel depart.

"We had officers and civilians start crying, because they knew that our contingency was leaving," Wilson stated. "We were being replaced by another law enforcement aspect, but because we were that first deployment effort, they grew attached to us. And we grew attached to them too."

The NJDOC officers were thankful for the experience. They gave much of their time and energy to aid Puerto Rico and its residents as the country works tirelessly to get itself back to normal. The officers all agreed that they'd return to help in a heartbeat if the opportunity ever arose.

"It's always about the people," McGowan said.







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## 'My Way'

# Correction Officer by Day, Crooner by Night

By Melanie Weiss

In the realm of corrections, Lieutenant Sam McDonough is the second-shift commander at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women in Clinton. Outside corrections, he is known for his smooth singing voice that carries on the spirit of crooners like Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Johnny Mathis.



*Lieutenant Sam McDonough serves as the second-shift commander at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.*

McDonough, who began his corrections career in the summer of 1993 with the Mercer County Department of Public Safety before being hired by the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) in September 1998, discovered he had a singing talent about two decades ago.

"I was working at a restaurant in Hamilton, and there was a live band," McDonough recounted, noting that he was good friends with the restaurant owner's grandson, who was supposed to sing with the band that night. "For whatever reason, my buddy didn't show up, so his grandmother told me to get up there and sing something."

After some goading, McDonough sang in front of an audience for the first time, serenading listeners with "My Way," written by Paul Anka and popularized by Frank Sinatra.

"It was the only song I knew all the words to, because that was my favorite song," McDonough said. "The trumpet player in the band asked if I knew anything else and I said, 'That's it! That's all I know.' Unless they could play some Van Halen, since I grew up in the hair band era."

After that night, McDonough started participating regularly in karaoke contests at various venues, dominating the competition with the same friend whose absence led to McDonough's singing debut.

"Of course, my buddy, the professional singer who had a stint in Las Vegas, would always win, and I would come in second," McDonough said. "The ones he didn't show up for, I would win."

Advancing from karaoke contests, McDonough, whose only previous music experience was as a trumpet player in high school, began singing solo for audiences at venues throughout the Mercer County area.

At his first event, to McDonough's surprise, 50 spectators filled up the venue's maximum capacity to listen to his tunes.



*McDonough sings at a Hamilton restaurant.*

"I was as shocked as anybody," said McDonough. "Somehow, as luck would have it, there's still a call for this type of music. Then, I thought, 'Now I have to be good!'"

With experience as a leader in such organizations as the Trenton Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Trenton Council of the Knights of Columbus, McDonough said that he usually is outspoken and has no problem speaking in front of crowds. But, he admitted that he was as nervous as he could possibly be to sing in front of 50 expectant guests.

"Everything has to be perfect when you're singing for an audience," said McDonough, who also incorporates into his performances Sammy Davis Jr. and Elvis impersonations as well as one-liners from classic comedians like

Henny Youngman and Don Rickles. He can even sing a few songs in Latin and Italian.

Several years after his first event, McDonough now sings regularly at various venues in the Mercer County area, and he always draws a crowd.

"I can't say I don't get nervous anymore. I always want to put on a good show," McDonough said. "It does get easier and more fun the more you perform."

McDonough has amassed several fans, including his 93-year-old grandmother, who McDonough said takes every opportunity to listen to him sing, and for whom he always sings her favorite song, "Spanish Eyes."



*Several NJDOC employees often get together to listen to McDonough sing. Gathered are (from left): Sharon Aker (NJSP), McDonough, Lieutenant Scott Scheuermann (EMCF), Senior Correction Officer Pete Harrison (NJSP) and Tina Palmer (NJSP).*

McDonough credits his grandparents for introducing him to music like Sinatra, whom, he confessed, he was not a fan of at first. He reminisced about visiting his grandparents on weekends as a child, recounting how they would listen to "Sunday with Sinatra" on the radio.

"I hated it back then," McDonough recalled. "It wasn't cool to like Sinatra. But through the years, I grew to

love it, thinking about all the good times and conversations my family had over that music."

There is also a fan base of NJDOC employees who enjoy McDonough's singing, including Tina Palmer, a data control clerk who works in the Mental Health Department at New Jersey State Prison (NJSP).

"We call ourselves 'The Followers,'" said Palmer. "There's a group of five or six of us and our families and significant others who love Sam's singing and get together to hear him."

Palmer has known McDonough for nearly 15 years, becoming friends with him while he was assigned to NJSP.

"Every time I would go to Sam's unit, he would be singing," Palmer said. "If he wasn't singing, something was wrong."

Palmer saw McDonough sing for an audience for the first time several years ago.

"It was incredible," she recalled. "We were enamored. Sam is very talented, and on top of that, he is a wonderful person with a great sense of humor."

McDonough performs not only for the enjoyment of his audiences, but for his own.

"A career in corrections has provided me with a life that I don't think I would have had otherwise," he said, "but I do enjoy singing outside of that. It's good, clean fun."







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## Moral and Professional

# NJDOC Pipe and Drum Band Members Receive Departmental Service Awards

By Melanie Weiss

Sergeant Sean O'Neill and Senior Correction Officers Wesley Butts and Jared Pollen have several things in common: They live in the same neighborhood, they are members of the New Jersey Department of Corrections Pipe and Drum Band, and they each received a Departmental Service Award during



*Posing with their children at the Correction Officer Day ceremony are (from left): SCO Wesley Butts (NJSP), Sergeant Sean O'Neill (CRAF) and SCO Jared Pollen (NJSP).*

the Correction Officer Day ceremony at Central Office headquarters on July 30, 2017.

O'Neill, Butts and Pollen each were presented with the Commissioner's Commendation for their efforts in assisting with a motor vehicle accident that occurred in Pemberton Township on July 14, 2016.

The officers, who were all assigned to New Jersey State Prison (NJSP) at the time, were carpooling to work when they observed a sport utility vehicle off the road at approximately 1 p.m.

"We all had this moment where we asked each other, 'Was that a car in the woods back there?'" said Butts, who was driving that day.

Butts turned around so the three officers could survey the scene of the accident.

"It looked like it happened recently. There was smoke coming from the engine," recalled O'Neill, who was promoted to Sergeant and assigned to the Central Reception and Assignment Facility (CRAF) shortly after the incident. "The car was destroyed. It was astonishing that the driver survived."

Fortunately, no other cars or passengers were involved. Butts said that the passenger side of the vehicle was crushed. Pollen also described the scene as looking dire.

"All the windows were busted out," he said. "The hood, the roof, everything was caved in."

Soon after the officers arrived, another passerby stopped to help. He had useful items like a crowbar, a chair and towels. With the tools and assistance of the good Samaritan, Pollen was able to pry open the door of the vehicle to free the driver, who, although groggy and dizzy, only suffered a few cuts.

The driver was unable to recall what happened, but from what the officers could tell, the vehicle was driven at a high rate of speed off the road and into the woods where it crashed into a downed tree.

While Pollen tended to the driver in the woods, offering basic first aid until the arrival of first responders, Butts and O'Neill were at the roadside calling 9-1-1 and directing traffic.

As the officers were going to be late for their shift, they called into the facility to report what had happened. This is the only reason why anyone knew of the officers' efforts for which they were awarded the Commissioner's Commendation.

In fact, these officers have assisted with many emergency situations throughout the years that they have been making their nearly hour-long commute, not to mention helping out with accidents on their own personal time.

Butts pulled over to help accident victims even before becoming a correction officer, noting that, at that time, cell phones were not common.

"Before cellphones, you relied on other drivers to stop, then they would have to go somewhere to find help," he said. "Now, if it's a minor accident, people are already on their cellphones by the time anyone stops to help."

O'Neill previously earned a Meritorious Service Award for providing first aid to the victims of the crash of a dump truck and a car. He also stopped to help with another incident involving a dump truck that collided with a car before overturning. He was on his way to the dentist.

"My training in corrections has taught me how to react in all sorts of situations," O'Neill said. "I carry a first aid kit in my vehicle, so if anything ever happens, I grab that and go see what needs to be done."

Pollen noted that when it comes to lending a hand in an emergency, it's both the moral and professional thing to do.

"You do what you have to do as a compassionate person," said Pollen. "There's a moral obligation to help."

As Butts pointed out, a person wearing a law enforcement uniform is looked upon by civilians to be the leader during emergencies.

"The uniform raises the bar," Butts said. "People look around for someone to take charge, and when they see a uniform, they assume that person will be in charge."

"When I was working in construction," he added, "I was just another somebody until the first officer arrived at the scene. It didn't matter what type of officer. Now, I am that officer that people turn to. That's where the blue comes in."

Not only have these officers demonstrated their dedication to their jobs and their fellow citizens, but they have further displayed their commitment to the NJDOC through their involvement in the department's Pipe and Drum Band.

A bagpipe player for more than three decades, Butts was awarded with a Commissioner's Commendation last year for his work as the Pipe and Drum Band major. He recruited his carpool partners, Pollen and O'Neill. Butts has been able to personally teach Pollen how to play during their commute and

before the start of their shift. Pollen said it took him about a year to play proficiently.

O'Neill has been playing the bass drum in the band for a little over a year, learning the beats from fellow drummer Sergeant John Pomponio of East Jersey State Prison.

Typically, the members of the band learn and practice independently since they hail from across the state. They are also responsible for procuring their own equipment and dress.

Major Wayne Manstream of the Correctional Staff Training Academy has been especially supportive of the band, working with the group for approximately five years and inviting them to the Academy to recruit new members.

"The band represents the department in a positive light at all events," said Manstream, who assists in arranging the band's appearances at various events. "They all put in a great deal of effort and are nothing but professional."

The members of the band, comprised of both current and retired correction officers, perform throughout the year at funerals, officer graduations, Blue Mass events, the Fred Baker memorial, and any other significant occasion that requires such ceremonial representation of the NJDOC.

Butts, Pollen and O'Neill performed with the band at the Correction Officer Day ceremony during which they received their Commissioner's Commendations. They each agreed that helping others isn't about getting awards, but about doing what is right for those in need. However, they were honored to be recognized during the ceremony.

"That day I really felt appreciated," Pollen said. "The Commissioner, the administrators, the families – they were all there. It was a big day.

"My 4-year-old daughter said, 'Daddy, I wanna go to your next awards.' I had to tell her, 'Well, I need to earn another one first!'"

Considering the history of these officers and their travels, it is only a matter of time before a situation comes up that will require their attention.

As Pollen stated: "Every day is the same until it's different."







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## 'Holiday Cheer'

# Title XX Program Allows Inmates to Celebrate the Holidays with Family

By Melanie Weiss

The holiday season is a time to spend with loved ones. Thanks to the Title XX program, the inmates at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (EMCF) had the opportunity to participate in holiday merriment with their families on Monday, December 11, and Wednesday, December 13.



*A choir sings holiday favorites for those attending the Title XX holiday celebration at Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (EMCF).*

Tinaya Warthen has been taking part in the Title XX holiday party for the past two years. This year, she was joined by her mother and three sons.

"I am blessed to be able to see my kids for another holiday," Warthen said. "I'm so happy that I get to celebrate and enjoy the holiday with my children. I'm so thankful for this event."

Nearly a dozen minimum-security and medium-security inmates gathered with their families for the Monday festivities. Another party was held concurrently for maximum-security inmates in a separate area.

Deborah Phillips, who has been participating in the holiday party for eight years, was joined by her daughter and her grandchildren.

"It's like a weight is lifted when the children come," said Phillips. "I still get to watch them grow up. It's a beautiful feeling."

As guests filed into the room where the party was held, a choir of inmates greeted them with classic holiday tunes. Board games were placed on each festively-adorned table. A buffet of food filled the room with enticing aromas.

The food and transportation for the guests were provided through the Title XX program.

Title XX is a county grant program that provides funding for participating counties to offer transportation and other visitation amenities to the children of EMCF inmates.



*Deborah Phillips enjoys the company of her grandchildren.*

According to EMCF Social Work Supervisor Amelia Renshaw, the Title XX program, also known as the Mother/Child Visitation program, originated in 1978.

"The program was developed because research shows that women who learn to become better mothers are less likely to return to prison, and their children adjust more easily when they are reunited," explained Renshaw.

Each county has a pick-up site where children and their guardians can take a bus to EMCF to visit their mothers. Children who are 7 years of age or older can travel by themselves.

Nancy Nazario, assistant social work supervisor at EMCF, said that those living in areas that do not participate in Title XX can still board at any pick-up site.

"So, if someone lives in Philadelphia, they can still go to, say, the Camden County pick-up site to take advantage of the transportation to visit their loved one," said Nazario.

Nazario added that the holiday party planning begins in October with arranging for transportation and compiling the roster of attendees. Area churches donate gifts to be distributed during the celebration.

"It's really wonderful and heartwarming to be able to see the mothers spend time with their children for the holidays," Nazario said.

Tiffany Byers, former Title XX coordinator at EMCF who was recently assigned as a classification officer at Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility, played an integral role in all of the program's efforts, including this year's holiday party. Byers agreed that the work that goes into planning the party is well worth it.



*LeeAnne Kozlowski attends her first Title XX holiday party with her daughter.*

"There's a lot that goes into planning and coordinating the party," said Byers. "The ultimate goal is to see everything come together the day of the event. The families are here. All that work is for this moment."

LeeAnne Kozlowski had just found out days before that her 12-year-old daughter would be attending the event. She also expressed her gratitude for the Title XX program's many other initiatives.

"The Title XX program is fantastic," Kozlowski raved. "The program gives us opportunities to spend time with our kids as we would at home."

For example, the Title XX program provided funding for EMCF's first Children and Family Environment (CAFE), which opened in January 2017. The CAFE is a home-like space with games, toys, books, comfortable furniture and a kitchen area where mothers can spend time with their children.

"It's nice to be able to hang out with our kids in an area that doesn't look like a prison environment," Kozlowski said. "The social workers who run the Title XX program really do care about us and our kids."





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## 'Keeping Cool'

# Correction Officer Aids Colleague Suffering from Stroke

By Patrick Lombardi

Senior Correction Officer Stephen Kenney of New Jersey State Prison (NJSP) was working an approved overtime shift at the Juvenile Medium Security Facility, a Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) facility in Bordentown, last August when he was alerted of an emergency situation. Fellow NJSP officer Cynthia Thorpe was also working overtime at the JJC facility; she and Kenney were the only two New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) officers present at the JJC facility that evening.

"We had just finished responding to a code, so everyone was on edge," said Kenney. "Then the sergeant of the facility called me. He said it was a medical distress situation."

Kenney hurried to the east side of the facility and saw Thorpe lying on the ground outside of her post. A couple JJC officers were tending to her.



*Officer Stephen Kenney has worked at New Jersey State Prison for more than 16 years.*

"When I got there, I told one of the officers to support her head, because she was leaning back on the stairs," Kenney said. "I could tell by her face that she was in distress. I looked at her wrist; she had a medical ID bracelet, which didn't specify what conditions she suffered from, but then I remembered that someone had said she had heart problems."



Thorpe was suffering from a stroke, and Kenney worked quickly to ensure that Thorpe remained safe and as calm as possible.

"I monitored her vitals and laid her flat with help from other officers," said Kenney, noting that he directed another officer to get an Automated External Defibrillator. "Luckily, we did not have to do CPR, but we had all of the equipment if we needed to."

Paramedics quickly arrived on scene and brought Thorpe to a nearby hospital, where she was rushed to surgery.

"The doctor said that if she didn't get there when she did and if we didn't do what we did to get her to where she needed to be, she wouldn't have made it," Kenney explained. "She had two surgeries that night, and she was in the hospital a couple weeks after that."

Thorpe recovered and is doing well.

"The thing that made me so proud was the way that DOC and JJC worked together," said Kenney. "The other officers treated her like she was a sister in blue. They gave her an escort to the hospital, and they had two officers stationed at the door of her room in the hospital."

Kenney, who has been with the NJDOC for more than 16 years, credits the department's extensive emergency training to his success in assisting Thorpe that August evening.

"Without a doubt, the DOC emergency situation training has helped so much," he said. "We do it year after year after year, so now it's basically like clockwork. You know exactly what to do in these situations."

As NJDOC and JJC officers receive the same emergency response training, they were able to fluidly navigate this situation collectively without incident.

"All the officers knew exactly what their roles were and what to do," said Kenney. "It was impressive."





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## Sweet Science

# Senior Correction Officer Is Fighting the Good Fight

By Matt Schuman

Corrections is Carlos Rosario's profession, but boxing is his passion.

"I feel so fortunate to be part of this department," said Rosario, a senior correction officer at New Jersey State Prison who has been with the New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) since June 2016. "I love the prison. I love the people I work with. There's not a day that goes by that I don't learn something new."



*Carlos Rosario's right hand connects with his opponent's jaw.*

However, the place in which he feels most comfortable is a boxing ring.

"It's almost like an addiction for me," the 27-year-old Rosario admitted. "Even if I tried to stop boxing, I know I'd end up back in the gym. Not only is it the norm for me, but the vibes I get from everyone at

home and in work is that they want to see me keep going as far as I can in boxing. So that's what I'm going to do."

After an outstanding amateur career, during which he compiled a 27-4 record and reached the state finals in the Diamond Gloves tournament, Rosario turned professional in the summer of 2014, shortly before going to work for the NJDOC. His 7-3 record includes a defeat in his pro debut, followed by seven consecutive victories, then losses in his two most recent fights.

"The seven straight wins came right around my time at the [Correctional Staff] Training Academy," Rosario noted. "I don't think that's a coincidence. In fact, my current training regimen is very similar to what I was doing at the Academy."

The two recent losses convinced him to take time off to focus on training. When he returns to the ring, it will be in a different weight class – 140 pounds, up from 130.

"I attribute both of those losses to weight cutting," he said. "They certainly were the two best fighters I've faced so far – they had a combined record of 20-2 – but there's no reason I shouldn't have been able to beat both of them if I felt 100 percent. At the time of the fights, I didn't feel like anything was wrong. But the tape doesn't lie. When I went back and looked at those fights, I could see things. I was wearing down as the fight went on."

"Going forward, we want to go into fights not having to worry about maintaining my strength and stamina for the entire fight," he continued, "so we have decided that my best fighting weight is 140."



*Senior Correction Officer Carlos Rosario poses in front of New Jersey State Prison.*

By “we,” Rosario was referring to himself and his older brother, Nick, who introduced him to boxing and serves as his trainer.

Although Nick Rosario never fought, he has long been a fixture at boxing gyms. By the time Carlos was 10, he was accompanying his brother to the gym on a regular basis, even though his father wouldn’t allow him to actually fight.

Instead, Rosario participated in other sports, most notably wrestling. He went on to earn all-conference recognition in wrestling at Pennsauken High School.

However, boxing remained his first love.

“In the beginning, boxing was just a hobby for me,” he related. “I enjoyed the workout, and the gym was a good place to burn off all of that energy that most young kids have. As I got older, I started to realize that I could only go to a certain point with wrestling, but with boxing, I eventually could make some money and hopefully fight for titles.”

At age 18, eight years after entering a boxing gym for the first time, Rosario finally had his initial amateur fight.

“I remember being nervous and getting tired really quickly,” he said, “but it was an awesome experience.”

After a seven-year amateur career during which Rosario fought many of the top competitors locally as well as nationally, the decision was made to join the professional ranks.

“It’s not an easy transition,” he said. “You have to take off your headgear, fight with lighter gloves and fight four or more rounds [amateur fights are three rounds]. But after talking it over with my brother, I decided it was the right time to go pro.”

His first fight as a professional was August 23, 2014, at Bally’s in Atlantic City, a split decision loss to Grashino Yancy.

“I made my entrance with the music playing, the fans cheering, the whole shebang,” Rosario recalled, chuckling. “I actually thought I won the fight, but even though I didn’t get the decision, I definitely wasn’t discouraged. I couldn’t wait for my next fight.”



He won that next fight, held at the Valley Forge Casino and Resort, just outside Philadelphia, by unanimous decision, then followed that with a knockout victory at the 2300 Arena in South Philadelphia. Five more wins, then two defeats followed.

Rosario is both excited and confident as he prepares to move up in weight class when he returns to the ring. He trains at least 20 hours per week, including five-mile runs four days each week.

"It seems as if everyone wants an undefeated record, but I don't really care about that," Rosario declared. "I just want to be known for having great fights and, hopefully, winning great fights. To do that, you have to face quality opponents, which I don't mind doing. I've already fought for a regional title" – his last fight was for the World Boxing Federation's Junior Regional North American Championship – "and I see no reason I can't fight for titles again."

He's unconcerned about the possibility that his power will be negated against bigger opponents, since larger sparring partners have assured him that his punching power is more than sufficient.

He also expects his cheering section in upcoming fights to be more than sufficient, especially if he continues to fight in New Jersey or Southeastern Pennsylvania.

"When I first turned pro, all I had were family and friends coming out to my fights," he said, "but since I've been at the Department of Corrections, a lot of my co-workers have been at my fights, and it's really increased the size of my fan base. I can't tell you how much that means to me."





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## Be Aware

# Officer Assists Elderly Woman Bleeding on City Sidewalk

By Melanie Weiss

As Senior Correction Officer Yahaida Figueroa was driving home after checking in on her grandmother, she couldn't have known that she would be lending a helping hand to another elderly woman in that same trip.



*Senior Correction Officer Yahaida Figueroa has been with the NJDOC since February 2014.*

"While I was driving, I saw a lady on the ground," recalled Figueroa, who has been with the New Jersey Department of Corrections since February 2014 and is assigned to the Central Reception and Assignment Facility. "I actually drove a little past her and then hit reverse to go back. There was blood everywhere. It looked like something out of a movie."

The lady – Alice Wasielewski – was walking down Mulberry Street in Trenton last October when her rolling cart collapsed, causing her to fall forward. The fall resulted in a four-inch gash on her forehead from which she was bleeding heavily onto her face, clothes and the sidewalk. According to Wasielewski's daughter, Carol Wasielewski, her mother had been trying for several minutes to flag down passing motorists for help, but no one stopped to aid her until Figueroa pulled over.

"Officer Figueroa stopped her car and ran to my mother's aid without any concern for her own safety," Carol Wasielewski said.

Figueroa noted that there were two other good Samaritans at the scene who appeared to be panicking, but utilizing her corrections training, she was able to take control of the situation. She admitted that she typically does not react well to blood, but in the moment, she was able to work through it to help the woman.

One of the other individuals on scene supplied a shirt that Figueroa used to apply pressure to Wasielewski's wound as she simultaneously called 9-1-1.

"She wanted to go home," Figueroa recounted, adding that Wasielewski insisted that she did not need to go to the hospital. "She thought she would be all right. I said, 'Not on my watch.' I made sure she got to the emergency room."

With first responders on the way, Figueroa wanted to notify a member of the victim's family of the incident, but Wasielewski, who had lost a lot of blood and become quite confused, could not remember where she kept the emergency contact information for her daughter, nor could she recall her daughter's exact place of work. After learning that Wasielewski's daughter worked for a hotel in the Cherry Hill area, Figueroa proceeded to call several establishments until she was able to reach her.

Wasielewski was transported to the hospital and spent hours in the emergency room. As described by Carol Wasielewski, her mother suffered extensive bruising on her face and had limited vision in her left eye for days due to swelling. She also needed 20 stitches on her forehead.

Wasielewski has since made a full recovery.

"I don't know what would have happened if Officer Figueroa didn't stop to help my mother," said Carol Wasielewski. "Words cannot express my thanks and gratitude for her kindness and heroic deed."

